

Benny Was My Friend (part 3 of 'Lover I Don't Have to Love') by obeydontstray

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Summary: Two scenes. One set when Hop finds Benny after his 'suicide' The other is Benny's funeral set after Joyce storms out of the morgue but before Jim stakes out the Hideaway. Jim and Joyce provide each other a moment of comfort for their losses.

Benny Was My Friend (part 3 of 'Lover I Don't Have to Love')

"Benny was my friend." Jim swallowed back the bile threatening to rise in his throat. Benny's eyes are open, and that fact bothers him more than anything else. His old friend was looking right at him, but he'd never see him again. Benny didn't do this. He didn't kill himself. If it had been anyone else he might have believed it, but not Benny. Hopper glances at the people around him and clears his throat. "Can I have a minute with the body?" His voice cracks at the last word, having to refer to his old friend as just a body hurt him more than anything. When the room cleared in response, he removed the pill bottle from his pocket and took a seat opposite where Benny lay across the table. He shook two pills into his palm and swallowed them dry.

"Who did this to you?" He asked the body, halfway expecting an answer. "I know you wouldn't cancel our fishing trip like this." Benny's eyes are unfocused and Jim could suddenly remember how the other man's smile would reach his eyes whenever he laughed. "Benny, Benny, Benny." He sighed, settling back into his chair. "I'll end whoever did this to you." He reached across the table and closed his friend's eyes. "Rest in peace, old friend." He stood but he lingered at the edge of the table, near Benny's open hand. There should be more words for this, more words to express just what Benny meant to him over the years. A best friend. A lover, occasionally. The one who kept him from hitting the bottom completely. "I love you Benny."

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(After Joyce leaves the morgue, before Jim's stakeout at the Hideaway)

Jim couldn't wait for the service to end. He was itching to reach the bottom of a bottle as fast as possible. He fidgeted with his flannel, remembering how much Benny would protest whenever he had to wear some fancy suit. The whole thing was ironic. Such a formal service for such an informal sort of guy. Benny would've hated all of this.

The graveside service ended quickly and the few folks that showed up dispersed rapidly. Jim lingered at the graveside, watching as the black casket was lowered into the ground slowly.

"Hey."

Joyce stood just behind him. "I'm sorry I missed the service. I was finalizing plans-" the words died on her lips but he gathered that she'd finalized Will's funeral plans. "I'm sorry for your loss, Hop. I know you guys were close." She closed the gap between them and slid her hand effortlessly into Jim's. He was thankful for the small measure of comfort.

"I'm so sorry about Will." He added and she nodded.

"Thank you. You look like we need a drink, Hop."

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After a few shots between them, Joyce found herself under Hopper on her couch. Nothing sexual, just full body contact. She still was glad Jonathan wasn't home.

Hopper lay between her legs, his chest pressed against hers and his weight on his arms as he held her close. His heart beat against her's, reminding him that Benny's heart would never beat again. Reminding Joyce that something resembling her son lie in a morgue downtown. Seeking out her warm comfort, Hop buried his face in the crook of her neck. "Something's not right, Jim." He shifted, moving to pull away from her.

"I know. This is wrong, I'm sorry."

"No, stay here." She said, pulling him closer until his warm breath caressed her neck again. "I meant about Will. He's not dead, Jim."

"Joyce. I know something's not right about how we found him but I promise you, I'm getting to the bottom of it. I should be out working right now."

"He's not dead, I mean it." She said, gesturing to the endless strings of lights around them.

"Joyce, sweetheart. He's gone. And I'm so, so sorry. I know the pain all too well."

"Will, honey. Can you show the Chief?" She called out to the room around them.

Jim sigh, burying his face in her neck again. "I'll get to the bottom of this, Joyce. And then it'll all make sense. I promise."

"C'mon Will, baby. Show us."

Jim leaned back and kissed Joyce's forehead. "I've got to get back to work. I know this is really hard, but you've got to let go." He sat back on his knees and took her hands in his. "He's gone, Joyce."

Tears welled up in her eyes and he pulled her to her knees, hugging her tightly against his chest. "If you need me sweetheart, you know where to find me." With one last kiss on top of her head, he stood and left her kneeling on the couch alone as he headed for the door.